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# Soviet Union Is Vulnerable In Its Economy

In an earlier column, I described the "low-risk, low-cost, low-profile" offensive that the Soviet Union is directing against the United States. There is a way to fight back.

The Kremlin is harboring drug smugglers, subsidizing terrorists and training revolutionaries who are then unleashed against the West. The purpose is to destabilize the western governments, with the United States as the ultimate target.

But if the United States is vulnerable to drugs and terrorism, the Soviet Union also has its soft underbelly. The Soviet economy is foundering; its Marxist system has been unable to produce sufficient food and consumer goods, and the ruble won't buy much these days.

This has reduced Soviet influence around the world. A secret CIA report dug up by my associate Dale Van Atta says, "In the third world, Moscow's hard currency assistance to communist clients has become more restrained."

In other words, left-leaning countries need hard currency, a commodity that the Soviets are running

short of. They can't even afford to keep their allies supplied with arms. Here's an excerpt from another secret report: "The U.S.S.R. will be even less willing than before to undertake major assistance efforts similar to those carried out in the past for Cuba and Vietnam."

And still another excerpt: "[The Soviet Union] is encountering growing economic difficulties, which will make it more difficult to increase its imports from the West in the future. The outlook for most Soviet exports, including oil, is not favorable."

The bottom line: the Soviet system is highly vulnerable to economic warfare. The Soviet economy is in distress; it can be crippled. Dollar diplomacy might work after all.

By applying economic pressure, the western alliance might convince the Kremlin to stop supporting revolutionaries, terrorists and drug smugglers. An agreement to end this subterranean warfare ultimately might lead to disarmament and detente.

Here are a few economic squeeze plays that, in my journalist's presumption, I believe could bring the Kremlin to terms:

- The western powers could push the Soviets over the edge economically simply by shutting off credit. This would reduce the hard currency that the Soviets need to produce the

arms that have had such a destabilizing effect on the world.

- The United States has the economic power to break up the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and drive down the price of oil. This would hurt the Soviet Union, which must sell its oil for the hard currency it needs.

- The Soviets also need to sell natural gas to western Europe to earn more hard currency. By refusing to buy the gas and to help with the pipeline the Soviets are building, the European nations could bring the Soviets to the bargaining table.

- The United States should continue to sell as much grain to the Soviet Union as the Soviets are willing to buy. This costs the Kremlin precious hard currency that could be spent on arms.

- The United States could wage a covert trade war against the Kremlin, undercutting Soviet prices, hurting Soviet bids and dumping products to depress Soviet markets.

These moves would throw the Soviet economy into a tailspin and leave the Kremlin with no choice but to cut back on military spending and aggressive moves. Then Soviet President Yuri V. Andropov might become more amenable to negotiating a real detente and might call off the terrorists and revolutionaries.